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AGRICULTURE • ECONOMICS

From USDA's Economic Research Service

Fall 1988

USDA



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The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service has developed a series of computerized databases covering important elements of today's agribusiness and related activities here and abroad. A free catalog with descriptions and prices for each database is available from ERS.

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National Financial Summary, 1946-86  
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# Deciding Agricultural Policy

Concise, timely summaries of some of the important issues facing American agriculture help explain the complicated twists and turns of a farm policy decision as it affects producer income, consumer and government expenditures, and agriculture as an industry. Other reports look at the background to these policies, including who is affected and how. Check off the titles you want below:

## ISSUES

- Agriculture and Water Quality—**NEW**
- Debt Crisis in Developing Countries Hurts U.S. Agriculture—**NEW**
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- Price Parity: An Outdated Farm Policy Tool?
- Choices for Implementing the Conservation Reserve Assistance for Displaced Farmers
- Economic Growth, Agricultural Trade, and Developmental Assistance
- New Approaches to Financing Long-Term Debt
- Trade Liberalization in World Farm Markets
- Increased Role for U.S. Farm Export Programs

- Challenges in Designing U.S. Farm Policy
- Effects of Monetary and Fiscal Policy on U.S. Agriculture
- Mandatory Production Controls
- Redistributing U.S. Farm Program Benefits
- The Policy Web Affecting Agriculture

## BACKGROUND

- Agricultural Work Force Households: How Much Do They Depend on Farming?—**NEW**

## Also Free from ERS

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**1988 Agricultural Chartbook.** An overview of the current economic health of the American farm sector, in easy-to-read chart formats.

**Consumer Demand for Dairy Products: A Summary Analysis.** Analyzes the 1980's upturn in per capita consumption of dairy production in the United States. Per capita U.S. consumption of all dairy products in the United States first trended downward, then stagnated for the first two decades prior to the 1980's.

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**Food Costs...From Farm to Retail.** Retail food prices last year rose more than in other recent years. Food prices, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), rose 4.1 percent, up from the 3.2-percent rise in 1986. The increase was the largest since 1981 when the rate of inflation slowed sharply.

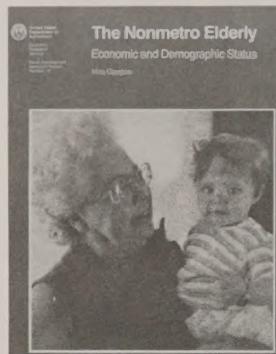
**Farming-Dependent Counties and the Financial Well-Being of Farm Operator Households.** Describes the general characteristics of areas that differ by their dependence on farming as an economic base and examines the financial conditions of farms in those areas.

**Surplus Crop Production and the Small Reclamation Projects Act.** Explores the apparent conflict between USDA commodity programs and Interior's subsidies for irrigation water, but finds relatively little waste of Government funds.

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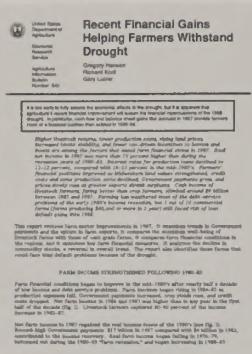
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**The Nonmetro Elderly:  
Economic and Demographic  
Status**, by Nina Glasgow.  
RDRR-70. 35 pp. June 1988.  
\$2.00.

A disproportionate share of the U.S. elderly population lives in nonmetro areas and has substantially more poverty than the metro elderly. The nonmetro elderly's poverty rate was 21 percent in 1980 versus 13 percent for metro elderly, while median incomes were \$4,111 versus \$5,003. Suggests the need for increased long-term care, welfare, and local planning to meet the elderly's needs in rural areas.



**Recent Financial Gains Help-  
ing Farmers Withstand  
Drought**, by Gregory Hanson,  
Richard Kodl, and Gary  
Lucier. AIB-543. August 1988.  
12 pp. \$1.00.

Reviews key farm financial indicators, examines trends in Government payments and the upturn in farm exports, and compares the economic well-being of livestock farms with those of cash grain farms. Rebounding livestock returns, lower production costs, recently rising land prices, increased lender stability, and fewer tax-driven incentives to borrow and invest are among the factors that eased farm financial stress in 1987, and are helping some farmers affected by the drought.



**The U.S.  
Soybean Industry**,  
by James Schaub,  
W.C. McArthur,  
Duane Hacklander,  
Joseph Glauber,  
Mack Leath,  
and Harry Doty. AER-588.  
May 1988. 51 pp. \$2.75.

U.S. soybean production has increased sevenfold since 1950, making soybeans the second highest valued crop after corn. This report describes the U.S. soybean industry from producers to consumers and provides a single source of economic and statistical information on soybeans.



**How the Dollar's Value  
Affects U.S. Farm Exports to  
Developing Countries**, by  
Mary E. Burfisher. FAER-237.  
July 1988. 20 pp. \$1.50.

U.S. exports may not necessarily increase when the dollar falls on the world market. This finding conflicts with conventional thinking that a weaker dollar means more demand for U.S. products because they become less expensive than goods from countries with stronger currencies. This report measures the effects of changes in currency exchange rates from 1980 to early 1987 on the import-buying power of 14 developing countries.

**The Soviet Livestock Sector:  
Performance and Prospects**,  
by Edward C. Cook.  
FAER-235. 33 pp. June 1988.  
\$1.75.

Increases in USSR livestock production exceeded population growth during 1965-85, but production did not keep pace with growth in consumer demand. This report analyzes Soviet attempts to modernize livestock production since 1965 and the results and costs of those attempts. The Soviet Union should maintain the 1983-87 livestock production growth rate (nearly 3 percent per year) into the 1990's. Costs of production are expected to continue increasing, but at a slower rate than in the 1970's.

## In 1984, it took longer to raise livestock in the USSR, and average cattle slaughter weights were lower

Average birth-to-slaughter times, 1984

Months

40

30

20

10

0

Cattle

Hogs



Average slaughter weights, 1984

Kilograms

500

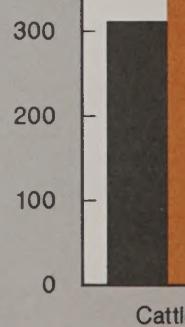
400

300

200

100

0



Kilograms

125

100

75

50

25

0



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Productivity and Erodibility of U.S. Cropland, by Ralph Heimlich.

The U.S. Broiler Industry, by Floyd Lasley, Harold Jones, Edward Easterling, and Lee Christensen.

Financial Performance of Specialized Rice Farms in the South, by Robert Dubman, Mary Ahearn, Gregory Hanson, and William Lin.

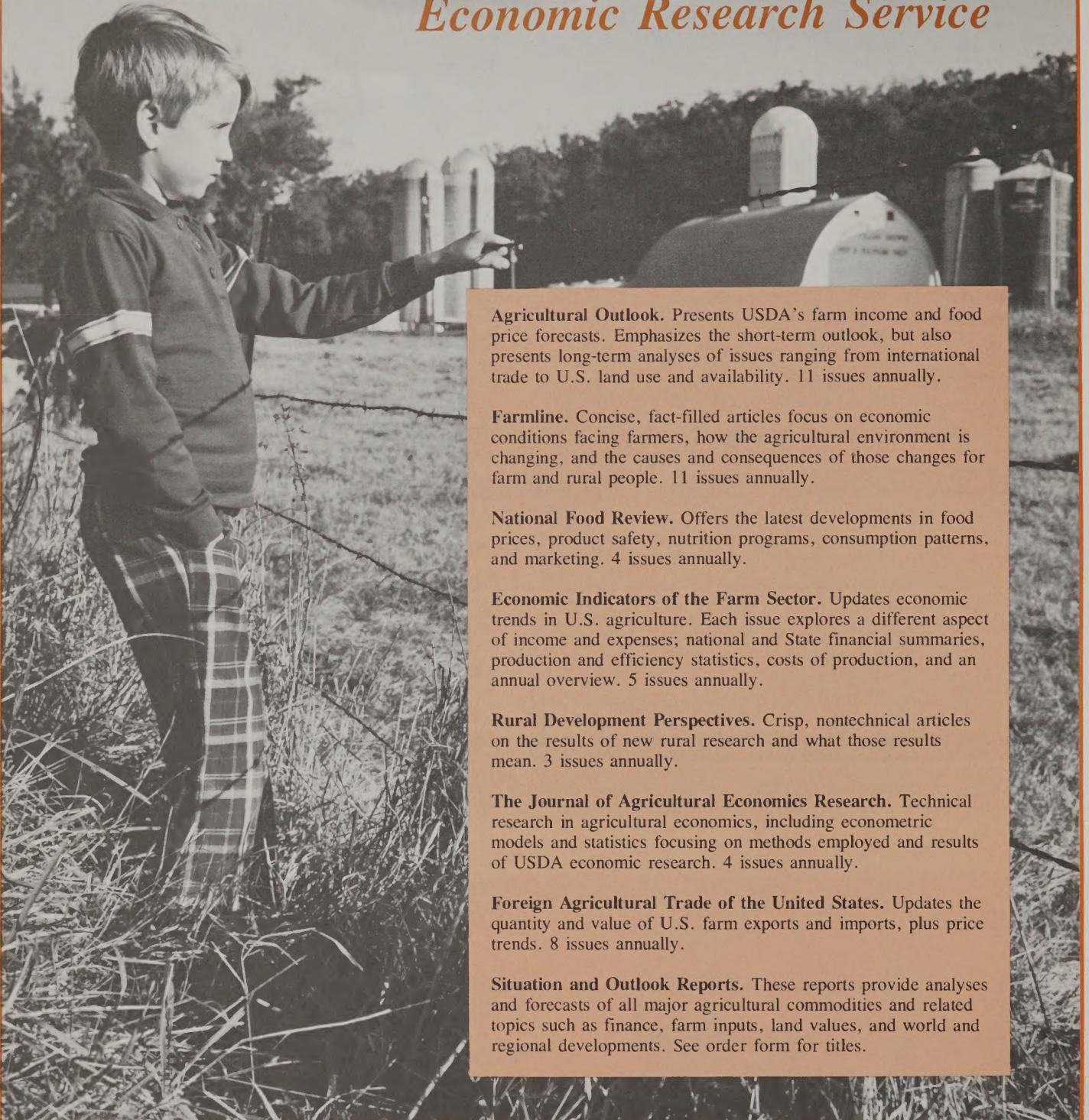
Food Marketing Review, 1987.

Recent Financial Gains Helping Farmers Withstand Drought, by Gregory Hanson, Richard Kodl, and Gary Lucier.

The U.S. Farm Sector: How Agricultural Exports Are Shaping Rural Economies in the 1980's, by Judith E. Sommer and Fred K. Hines.

Federal and State Regulations of Food Product Safety and Quality, by Julie A. Caswell.

Food Cost Review, 1987, by Denis Dunham.



# *Get these timely reports from USDA's Economic Research Service*

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